

MY DEAR TEDDY

T.S.Rajeswari

Assistant Professor English
Priyadarshini College Engineering and Technology
Nellore

I heard my father calling my mother; she is busy packing the teddies. This has been her usual routine from many years. She knew her job, hence, did not answer his call. Mother bothered to take care of only teddies, leaving me for my own care. I learnt to take care of myself from my third year. I did not taste the sweetness of morsels from my mother's hand. I gulp up my food with many other bitter realities served to me. Now I am eleven years old that, I saw the world quite long back and became a teacher of my school. The lessons in my school sound strange sometimes and grand sometimes, but I have to learn to by heart them, because there is no other teacher to make me understand them. There is no other school for me, the place where teddies lie is my school and my teddies are my mates.

My mom is always busy stitching teddies, decorating them leaving me to decorate myself. She looks at the beauty of teddies, too busy to look at me. I comb my hair take bath and dress myself. The teddies look bright and beautiful. I pray god "god why have you not made me a teddy? At least then my mother would hug me to her heart. But god has no time to listen to me. He moves from one place to another like my father to sell the fortunes. Only the rich can afford to buy them. I am not rich to buy good fortune from his basket, so I have to enjoy with whatever is served to me. Mom says when I grow big she would buy me everything. But when will I become big? She says that I am still young, I know that I become young whenever I demand for anything, but too old to take care of myself.

I started dreaming of new place. A beautiful and crowded city with ugly and shabby slum would be our next residence. The place outside the city, where only mighty rocks can dare to stand, would only give us an abode. I learnt to sleep in lullaby sung by vehicles. I lie in the mist and fog all through night. I am one with nature. Fog and mist dare not to threaten me with their supremacy. They recede looking at my courage. I challenge them with bare body. That is what has made me to feel proud, I am always the winner. I have been in the battle from my childhood, remaining always the winner. Many summers passed getting defeated in my hands. My black body faces the bright sun with a smile, mighty thunder retreats looking at my gaiety. My running nose never accepts defeat. I have become one with everything. I have become one with teddies (lifeless) but without charm. The body of teddies is soft, and velvety, but mine, coarse and rough.

'Deepu' there is a call from my mom, I went inside. She gave me a bowl of porridge. The sweet smell from the bakery enticed my nostrils. An ice cream vendor passed by, but these are only illusions not the reality. I gave the reality the guise of a dream and enjoyed it. My mom and papa also had their breakfast and are busy in arranging teddies on the carpet. Small and big an array of teddies decorated the place. I always view teddies as a family. This is a joint family with granny and grandpa. There are mother and father teddies too. The old teddies look worn out

with their dirty and folded body, are the grand parents for this family. These were not moved to any place from so many days. So they became old in their own place. There are fresh and young teddies looking smart and trim. The young ones are only preferred by all, so they only had the chance to see the world. The old remained in their place bidding good bye to the moving young ones.

My mom sat near the carpet dreaming, after setting them. Papa's eyes are always looking this way and that way anxious to receive revered guests. He tried to attract the people by his chanting about the greatness of teddies. He shouted:

**"Smart and cute teddies make your young one's smile,
They add beauty to your rooms and grandeur to your dreams"**

Papa's song has made some to come near and look the teddies. Children dragged their parents to look at the teddy exhibition, but, teddies didn't appeal to some, hence moved away reluctantly saying that they are not worth buying. Some others moved to them, but didn't carry, because they feel that the teddies cost too high.

A few came near inspected every face. My teddies appeared to me like orphans craving for their permanent home. Every time a customer came to them, teddies started dreaming of a new mom or dad who could bestow them a fine house with beautiful furniture and cushy beds and new friends stretching hands to receive them.

I had my pet teddy. I like it most of all. It is with me always. There is none to listen to me in this busy world. So I take my teddy and whisper my feeling to it. I hugged it to my heart when I feel scared and to my stomach when I feel hungry. It protects me from chillness as I put it on my body when I am asleep. Its beautiful dress and chubby cheeks make me feel that I too deserve a beautiful place in this world. At times it becomes my mother fondling my dry and scaly body and my father looking at me patronizingly. It also makes me feel that I am also important because it longs for my company. So, I loved my teddy. I sing to it.

**"Oh! My dear teddy I love you very much.
Your plump and lengthy nose makes me feel the warmth of my mother's breast.
Your spongy embrace gives my dreams a cushy base.
Your bulky stomach and velvety body makes me to feel that there is beauty
left for me to enjoy".**

I sing to my teddy and it listens to all my song and cheers up my spirits by its beautiful cheeks. It had become my beautiful world, where there is no place for hunger and anger.

I am in my dreams with my teddy betwixt the twinkling stars and dancing moon. I heard my mother shaking my body hard. I startled and looked at her – I don't know why mom is always angry with me. She snatched the teddy from my hand and was showing it to someone. I then observed a man standing in front of our teddy family looking at them. Along with him is a smart girl with chubby cheeks, dimple chin and curly hair exactly like my teddy. I looked at her with adoration. She smiled at me; the beautiful dimples in her cheeks made me feel that, my teddy friend had come to life.

I looked at my scaly dry body and was thrown back to reality and took a step back. The girl was pointing at my teddy, and her father wanted my mom to sell my dear teddy to her. My mom said that it costs rupees five hundred but the man is not much worried about the cost. My

mom snatched my teddy and put it in his hand not bothering about my feelings. The little girl waved her hand at me and said good bye, I too did the same as if I was in a trance.

I felt like something struck my throat. I couldn't speak, 'not' – I dare not speak. I looked into my mom's face with tear filled eyes. I think she was also moved looking at me. She hugged me and kissed me on my forehead. This is the least consolation I got for my bereavement, but I have to get satisfied, there is no other go. I didn't know whether I have to feel sorry for my teddy's departure or happy for my mother's rare cajoling touch. But I am intelligent. I learnt to search for happiness rather than to heap sorrows. So I thought after all my teddy got a beautiful new friend. If it were to be with me, it could turn dirty and ugly within a few days, losing all its charm, like me. With her, it would glow with beauty forever. It can roam in cars and lie on cushion beds which it deserves, which I wouldn't be able to give except in dreams. It hardly remembers me, its old mate. I am happy that it at least could lead a life, which I couldn't.

That night my mom took me to her warmth embrace putting her hands in my hair which relieved me of pain in head and heart which made me feel light. She patted me to sleep. In the dream I saw my teddy with her new friend happy as ever, roaming between the stars and playing hide and seek in the moon. I got up from the bed, twitched my eyes and felt happy again. My friend's happiness is mine.

Next morning I washed myself and I am ready to walk in to this beautiful world again. My mom is happy to see me smiling. I looked at my proud family, took a long breath with satisfaction. I looked at each teddy patronizingly, then one little teddy at the corner beckoned me with its looks. I went to it, and took it in my hands. It smiled at me as my old friend. I too smiled at it and kissed it as my mother had done me the previous night. It shrined itself into my embrace. I hugged it tight to my heart so that it could listen the song of friendship which always echoed in my heart.

I walked proudly with my new friend. Now I am not alone. I will be never alone in this world. I learnt to love, even to love the departure. I picked the new friend only to give up and make this world a beautiful and loving family.